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## A brief review of the labour movement in Japan

Sanzo Nosaka

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Workers of the world, unite!

**A Brief Review**  
of the Labour movement  
**in Japan.**

*By J. Nosaka.*

(Member of the General Federation  
of Labour of Japan, Yuai-kai).



MOSKOW

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRADE AND INDUSTRIAL UNIONS.

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# PART I

## The Early History

1867 — 1910.

### CHAPTER I.

The Forerunner of Trade Union. (1867 — 1900).

#### 1. The Birth of Bourgeois Japan.

The Revolution of 1867 («Meiji Ishin») saw the birth of «Modern» or „Bourgeois” Japan. Economic, consequently political, power transferred from the feudal-landlord to the rising commercial capitalist class, with the Emperor as their figurehead.

This was immediately (especially after the reactionary revolt of 1878) followed by „Industrial Revolution”. It should be remembered that the industrial slavery system was at the first step introduced into the textile industry which is still one of the main sources of Japanese bourgeois wealth, and also that the great majority of workers employed in this industry is composed of peasant girls. This is one of the reasons why we had a scanty existence of workers’ organisations at the earlier stage of Industrial Revolution.

During a quarter of century since the Bourgeois Revolution, therefore, there were, apart from friendly and trade societies, only a few Unions, of which the printers’ and metal workers’ were notable.

#### 2. The Forerunners of Modern Trade Union, 1897—1900.

In the meantime, young Japanese capitalists challenged China in 1894; and after two years’ fight succeeded in plundering Formosa and Korea from China, and in getting the right to share with European Countries in exploiting the vast commercial markets of China. This naturally caused a great economic prosperity, an important development



of industrialism and a consequent growth of the modern fighting proletariat. Those facts, side by side with an enormous advance of prices, gave a remarkable impetus to the combination movement of the working classes, as well as to industrial disputes.

Generally speaking, it is since those years that the modern Trade Union—a fighting body of enslaved classes against the bourgeois exploitation mainly in the industrial field—has come into existence in Japan.

A body which worked to a great extent for the développement of the movement was the „Society for the Promoting Trade Unions“ in 1897. The society was an educational or propaganda association established by a dozen intellectuals (Katayama, Takano, etc.), followed by thousands of workers.

The first Union, born directly from the propaganda of the above „Society“, was the „Iron Workers Union“ in 1897, consisting of metal workers in several workshops near Tokyo. This is a landmark in the History of the Japanese Trade Union movement, both in a historical sense and in structure. Although its formal object was friendly benefit and mediation in trade disputes, with the rapid growth in membership (claiming 5400 in 1900), it became more and more militant against the employers. But the defeat of a dispute the same year was a fatal blow to the young organisation and soon a rapid reduction of members came in.

In 1898, no less important Union, called „The Nippon Railway Culture Society“ of locomotive-engineers and firemen, arose from a great successful strike which had stopped the whole traffics in the north-eastern district. It enrolled 1000 membership and accumulated funds of £1000 in the second year.

In the same year, the Printers' Union with 2000 members, under the auspices of middle class politicians and some employers, rose, but to disappear. After the collapse of this Union, a small group of printing workers was formed, and this group was succeeded in 1907 by „The Oyu-kai“, and then in 1916 by „The Shinyu-kai“, one of the most militant Unions at the present time.

While the above Unions were the organisations which came to existence directly or indirectly from the devoted efforts of the „Society for the Promoting Trade Unions“, there were many other associations extending from skilled to unskilled workers, for the purpose of trade contract or mere friendly benefit. But those were of no significance historically.

### 3. The Police Law, Suppression and Collapse.

Now, turning to the field of class struggle, we witnessed the first appearance of industrial workers' mass action and labour unrests, which reached the climax in 1898—1899. Up to 1899 those disputes were closed comparatively in favour of the workers. But entering 1900 a sudden change came. Not only industrial and commercial depression had a serious effect on the movement, but also the possessing classes, alarmed by the rising tide of revolt of masses, put a speedy end to the strike action of the oppressed through legislative measures—that is the notorious Police Law of 1900, which is still exercising its mighty power. According to the article 17 of the Law, any action of instigation or agitation either for strikes or for increase of Trade Union membership is to be punished (imprisonment of one to six months). No discussion is necessary to prove that the Law practically forbids strikes and the organised movement of the working classes.

The result is easily foreseen. Within a short time, almost all noticeable Unions, one after another, ceased to exist.

In this manner, the earlier history of the Japanese Trade Union movement was concluded. During nearly a decade till 1912, when the „Yuai-kai“ was formed, the industrial workers' mass movement hardly showed any sign of life.

But the movement for the emancipation of the exploited class was not absolutely left for dead when the Trade Union quitted the battle field. For the field was promptly taken over by a forlorn hope—a group of revolutionary Socialists.

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## CHAPTER II.

### Socialist movement (1901—1910).

The history of Socialism in its wider sense can be traced far back into the radical movement of bourgeois Liberalism of 1877—1900. It was, however, not until 1901 that scientific Socialism took a form and programme as „The Social Democratic Party“. But the Party was an unfortunate child. It had no sooner come out than the government suppressed it. Then in 1903, „The Plebs League“ was formed by a dozen intellectuals for the purpose of study and Socialist propaganda. This was the father of Modern Socialism in Japan. It was the League



which sowed the seeds of revolutionary Marxism in the soil of Japan. It was also the followers or remnants of the League who have been today the leaders of Communist movement in our country. The period of 7 years from 1903 to 1910 was in fact the history of the League.

At the beginning of Russo-Japanese War (1904), the League sent comrade Katayama as a delegate to the Congress of the „Second International“ held then at Amsterdam and, on the other hand, made the most energetic agitation against the War, in which many members were sent to prison and their paper suppressed.

In 1905 the League itself was forced to dissolve.

The years following the Russo-Japanese War are marked by a series of important social events,—on the economic side, the great expansion of commercial markets, the astonishing growth of industrial (particularly Iron and Steel) Capitalism, the enormous advance of prices; on the political side, the „national“ upheaval against the „compromised“ peace terms with Russia, to which the government answered with Martial Law, and the first appearance of the „genuine“ bourgeois cabinet; abroad, the first Russian (proletarian) Revolution, and, at home, desperate struggles of Socialists, and incessant persecutions upon them.

It is of importance to notice the fact that there already appeared three main currents of thought in the Socialist movement: that is, Marxism led by Sakai, which always predominated over the rest; Anarchism (Kropotkin) led by Kotoku, one of the greatest thinkers Japan has ever produced; thirdly, Christian Socialism. In the practical movement, however, those sections always united against their common enemy which had prepared to sweep away by every forcible means all obstacles from the paths of bourgeois exploitation.

In 1907 they published the first Socialist Daily, called „The Pleb's Paper“, although soon prohibited.

In the next year, „Red Flag Demonstration“ took place, in which more than 50 active Socialists were arrested.

At last in 1909 occurred one of the most tragical events in the Socialist history of the world. Twenty four comrades were arrested under a false charge of „Anarchist Conspiracy“; and half of them (including Kotoku and Oishi) were hanged and another imprisoned for life.

The earlier history of our Socialist movement ended in such a tragical catastrophe. Surviving Socialists (mainly Marxists) have been kept under the extremest watch of police, chased by the hatred, calumny



and threats of the possessing classes. A few of them fled to foreign countries, and a few went over to enemy.

This is but the path through which all social martyrs had to and shall pass before their final goal could be attained. One thing, however, is regretful to the utmost,—they died, before they were able to attract the working masses to their Red banner, and before the masses would experience such a proletarian revolutionary rehearsal as the Russian workers experienced in 1905, the French in 1871, the British in Chartist movement. But nobody can blame our earlier Socialists by this reason when taking into consideration the economic and political conditions of the time, which were far from being ripe for social revolution.

At any rate, from 1910 to 1918, the whole Socialist movement went underground. Not a single protest against the capitalist robbery was heard. And the whole of the oppressed classes seemed to be thrown into the whirlpool of bourgeois Social-bettermentism or Class-harmonism.

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## PART II.

### Recent development.

1912 — 1921.

#### CHAPTER I.

„Yuai-kai“ and „Shinyu-kai“.

(1912—1917).

##### 1. Formation of the „Yuai-kai (Fraternal Society)“.

Not less than a decade after the wholesale collapse of the Trade Unions under one blow of the Police Law of 1900, and only two years after the massacre of leading Socialists and Anarchists, a new glimmer was thrown on the dark world of labour, not by Socialist, but by petit-bourgeois Reformers—that is, the formation of the „Yuai-kai“ (August 1912) by B. Suzuki as the President and a handful of workers in Tokyo, principally for the purpose of educating the working peoples.

During the first few years, the Yuai-kai did nothing but preach Reformism among its members and arbitrate in case of industrial disputes. But as there existed then no other organisations, the intellectual section of the working classes had begun to join it. Without any support from leaders at the Head Office, the rank-and-file members created the branches in their workshops, and everywhere took the most leading part in strikes, in agitation, and in social life. Thus in 1917 it claimed a membership of 27,000 men and women and more than 100 branches, based on area or workshop, all over the country.

In 1915 and 1916 the Yuai-kai sent the President as a fraternal delegate to the Conference of American Federation of Labour. Anyhow, this is the opening of the International relation of the Japanese Trade Union.

This unceasing development of the Yuai-kai met a hard blow (with lock-out, black-list, police-spy) from the employers who, both rightly and wrongly, attributed the labour unrest of the time to the existence of the Yuai-kai. Despite its moderate propaganda and its opportunist leaders, from 1917 onward it suffered from the bitter attacks of the possessing classes (especially in the government factories). The membership suddenly began to drop (16,000 in 1918), and, at the same time, the old leaders deserted it.

In spite of the ominous situation, in spite of the wish of the governing classes, the Yuai-kai did exist. Not only did so; the assaults upon it served as an invaluable stimulus to give up the former opportunist attitude toward the employer, thanks to the bourgeois autocracy. Since then the Yuai-kai has converted its function into a weapon of the class struggle and a school for educating the proletarian vanguard.

## 2. The „Shinyu-kai“.

Before entering the next period, it should be written on the no less important body, the „Shinyi-kai (Fraternal Society)“. As we have in the earlier history taken a glance at a long series of printing workers' fights. The „Shinyu-kai“ was the successor of the „Oyu-kai“ in 1916. At the outset, it was a pure craft-union with an exclusive policy by the European typographers employed in several plants in Tokyo. But soon it opened its door for all workers employed in the same industry, and in 1917 enrolled 700 members.

From the beginning the Shinyu-kai has been led by a few socialist workers and has taken the militant policy against the employer.



This has soon made the Union the focus of fire from the enemy camp. Above all, when the „Rice Riot“ broke out in 1918, a number of members were arrested under the charge of seditious action, and then came the secession of timid members from the Union. In a short while, it remained sick and sore.

### 3. The „Yuai-kai“ and „The Shinyu-kai“.

I have described in some detail two Unions, the „Yuai-kai“ and the „Shinyu-kai“, because these Unions are to-day not only leading the whole of labour movement, but also represent two types or tendencies of the Trade Unions.

It is not, therefore, without interest to make comparison, and to point out a few differences between them. In the first place, both differ in their origin. The Yuai-kai grew largely by effort of class reformers, from the above, for something „wider“ object, while the Shinyu-kai (of printers) was created by workers themselves in order to fulfil their own immediate necessities. Secondly, in the spiritual side, the former represented the compromising type of Union (however this is not the fact to-day), the latter the militant Unionism. Thirdly, the former was a General (Trades) Union or „One Big Union“ including several trades and industries. On the other hand, the latter was a Trade (or Industrial in the wider sense) Union of printing workers only.

In other words, the Yuai-kai was characterised by its constitution, organisation and number of membership, while the Shinyu-kai by its fighting spirit. Doubtlessly it is clear that the alliance of two Unions was absolutely necessary for the development of a proletarian revolutionary movement. And happily this was finally accomplished early in 1920.

### 4. General View of 1912—1917.

Strictly speaking, the working class movement as a whole was during the period in an embryo and chaotic condition both in practice and theory.

On the practical side, the Unions were left without strike fund, without benefit (except a small fund of sick benefit), without defined trade policy, and without concrete organisation. Moreover, on the spiritual side it was worse than that. Not merely the mass of workers, the Unions and their leaders lacked a clear idea of the class-struggle, a



clear comprehension of the Capitalist system and a definite programme for future action, but most of the Socialists (except a small Osugi Syndicalist group) shut themselves up in their study, keeping aloof from the practical movement, leaving the workers' organisations in the hands of Reformists.

But such a period did not last long. The historical year of the world revolution was coming nearer.

Outside those two, there was another Union in Osaka, called „Association for Conducting Trade Union“ of metal workers.

## CHAPTER II.

### Prologue of the Social and Industrial Upheaval, and

### Unorganised Strikes.

(1917—1918).

1917 and the following years mark the turning point in the world history, not only because the Workers' Republic was for the first time established in Russia, but also because the enslaved classes in the Far Eastern countries have begun to awake from their long sleep. In Egypt, in India, in China, in Korea, we have seen the open rebellions of the toiling masses against the exploiting classes, both foreign and at home at first in the form of riot and then organised mass action.

In Japan this tide of proletarian revolt and organising movement synchronises with (1) extraordinary development of industrial capitalism, (2) increase of industrial workers in number, (3) amazing advancement of prices, and (4) also with revolutionary ferments in Russia and Europe.

#### 1. Development of Industrial Capitalism.

Without doubt the „European War“ gave Japanese capitalists a golden opportunity for their expansion and adventure, while to European Capitalists it meant a sword for their suicide. During the War Japanese bourgeois triumphantly invaded the huge markets of the Eastern countries, seized upon navigation on the western part of Pacific and the Indian Sea, robbed the former German flash-houses in the South Sea for future large-scale piracy, and succeeded to lay with the sanction of the English government their avaricious hands on rich coal and iron fields in China. Everywhere Japanese and American robbers have knocked heads together and grappled together, leading both into another bloodthirsty War.

At home, economic gravity transfered from agriculture to commerce and industry. Also the iron and steel industry rose to the rank next to the textile. Financially, Capitalism has largely shaken itself free from British and American gold. The following figure tells us the uncommon increase of the „Productive Power“ in a last few years. (Also see the Appendix).

1914	£	25	millions
1915	„	30	„
1916	„	65	„
1917	„	156	„
1918	„	267	„
1919	„	406	„

This extraordinary growth of economic power profoundly reflected on every directions of the political and social life. The „heimin“ (plebeian, bourgeois, or democratic) Cabinet (based on a political Party—the „Seiyu-kai“—of the commercial and agricultural Capitalists) took in 1918 the reins of the government, throwing aside the Emperor and the aristocrats from the political sphere, and depriving the militarists of their mighty power. The franchise was more and more extended in the poor middle class. The Principle of „Democracy“ and „Liberty“ has been noisily advocated by bourgeois Liberals.

Thus „Bourgeois Japan“ was completely established.

## 2. Increase of Proletariat in number and power.

It is an inevitable result that such a capitalist development has been accompanied with no less rapidity by the increase in number and power of its mortal enemy—the proletariat and semi-proletariat, whose social position is naturally bringing up class-consciousness, class-antagonism in their minds. The following table clearly shows the fact. (Also see the Appendix.)

Year	No. of Factories	No. of Workers
1905	9,776	689,750
1914	17,062	911,453
1916	19,299	1,157,540
1918	22,391	1,504,761

(Factories quoted here are those which employ over ten workers).



### 3. High Prices.

The economic prosperity caused extremely high prices of life necessities (particularly of rice prices), resulting in the reduction of real wages. The next table indicates the heavy pressure which „War prosperity“ brought upon the life of the producing classes.

Year.	Index of Prices.	Among above Prices.		Index of Wages.	Diffe- rences.
		Rice.	Cotton.		
1900	100	100	100	100	0
1914	126	140	119	141	+15
1915	117	106	103	139	+22
1916	136	108	129	146	+10
1917	191	170	268	168	-23
1918	277	280	318	208	-69
1919	294	372	506	267	-27

### 4. Revolutionary ferments abroad.

Every events produced by the Western workers are keenly responded and soon followed by the Japanese workers. Above all, the proletarian Revolution in Russia aroused a stormy enthusiasm, awakened in them a great hope, and drew them into the vortex of the world-wide revolutionary ferments.

But the influence of the Russian Revolution over the Japanese proletariats should not be overestimated. Because the Japanese workers not only felt a great difficulty in getting the true news on Soviet Russia, but also they had been never well educated by the Socialist ideas.

### 5. Social and Industrial Unrest.

Now, Japan entered upon a period of great social and industrial-unrests which she had never seen in any of the foregoing periods. The



following figures will show the astonishing increase of strikes since 1917.

Year.	No. of Strikes.	Members directly affected.
1900	11	3,316
1914	50	7,904
1915	64	7,413
1916	108	8,413
1917	398	57,309
1918	417	66,457
1919	497	63,137
1920	185	162,366

#### 6. „Rice Riot“.

In August 1918 this unrest burst out as the notorious „Rice Riot“, at first in a hamlet and then spreading all over the country. Everywhere rice-merchants were raided by hungry peoples; beautiful show-windows along the busy streets were smashed down. In Kobe and Osaka a street fighting took place between rioters and military forces. The price of rice suddenly went down. But these wild risings were mercilessly suppressed by summoning armies and by the arrests of hundreds; and the mania faded away at the end of month.

It should be remembered that this event is not any sort of social revolutionary movement in character at all, but an unconscious and unorganised rebellion of the poorest masses against artificially high prices of rice particularly and against the rich people generally. Not only the majority of industrial and organised workers did not take part

in the „Riot“, but it entirely lacked revolutionary ideas and leaders! By saying so I do not imply that the Riot ended without any effect. But, on the contrary, it has left a profound lesson to the Japanese working classes—by demonstrating the mighty power of mass action or violent force against which the rich class was pitifully powerless, and by unmasking the real nature of the soldiers who were ordered to level their rifles against their starving „brothers and sisters“ instead of the foreign enemy.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### Amazing Growth of New Unions, a Series of Great Strikes. Sabotages. (1919).

Such a growing intensity of industrial disputes gave a fresh impetus to the Trade Union movement—both to the reorganisation of the existing unions and the creation of new unions.

##### 1. Reorganisation.

As early as 1919, we saw that the „Yuai-kai“ had already recovered from one year's sickness and a new movement to reconstruct its constitution had appeared with a definite form. Membership and branches began to increase. In April all local Committees in the Western district (Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto) formed a big District Council, publishing a local journal. In September the National Conference of the Yuai-kai decided to reconstruct it on the lines similar to „One Big Union“, which was more definitely assured by the 1920 Conference.

At the same time, hostility against its president, Suzuki, on the ground of his opportunism and reformism, has emerged from inside. It is certain that a new spirit, a new (left-wing) section was being born and the power of leading the Yuai-kai has been transferred from the old reformist to the new revolutionary leader.

This fact will be seen in a series of devoted struggles by the Yuai-kai during the following months.

Also the „Shinyu-kai“ of printers healed wounds which were received in the „Rice Riot“, and prepared in May for a fight for increased wages and an eight hours day.

In May the „Association for Conducting Trade Union“ was reorganised in the „Osaka Iron Workers' Union“, one of the biggest metal workers' Unions in Osaka.



## 2. Up till July.

As there had been before this year no other Unions than the above organisations, most strikes had been either led by the temporary strike committee or left without organisation. But experiences of strikes have always stimulated the spirit of combination. Already the time of unorganised strikes passed.

Since early 1919 there were a continuation of strikes and attempts at organising new unions among printing workers apart from the old Shinyu-kai. As a result, the „Reform Society“ was formed in July by printers employed in 15 daily paper printing offices in Tokyo. As soon as it came into being, it ordered a general strike and completely stopped the publication of all papers in the Metropolis for five days. But the strike aided by some middle class politicians broke from inside, and the Society pitifully fell to pieces.

Up till July we saw also the appearance of metal workers' and dockers' Unions in Tokyo, Osaka and districts, but the majority of them were very short lived.

## 3. August.

Six months from August 1919 to January 1920 marks new epoch in the Japanesse Trade Union movement. During this period Japan faced the great social upheavals, a mushroom growth of Unions, penetrating into the less industrial towns and the less skilled workers.

It is, however, to be remembered that along with the creation of real fighting bodies there increased such Unions as (1) Black-leg Union to keep away the employees from the real Union or to crush down the already existing body; 2) Yellow Union utilised by middle class politicians for their political ambition; 3) For the electoral purpose of the Labour Delegate on the Washington International Labour Conference.

In Aug. the „Koishikawa Labour Society“ (12,000) was established by workers of the Tokyo Ordnance Factory, and soon challenged the authority demanding the recognition of the Union, an eight hours day and higher wages. Backed by the sympathetic „down-tools“ of workers of other government factories, the strike continued for about ten days. Against this, the government called out gendarms, dismissed a large number of strikers and at last arrested 23 leaders. The Society was completely beaten, however surviving till now.

A result of this fight gave birth to two Unions. One is the

„Jujo-kai“ of employees of military powder mill who waged the sympathetic strike, and the other is the black-leg Union, called the „Kojo-kai“ spreading now to important government workshops over the country.

In this month, more important Unions appeared to exist. The „Transport Workers Union“ of tramway employees in Tokyo which challenged so-called „citizen“ with a general stoppage of city transportation early in 1920; the „Miners Society“, a strong Union in the northern colliery field of Kyushu; the „Miners Federation of Japan“ (5,000) at Ashio copper mine. The last Union succeeded in creating a branch at Kamaishi iron mine and later carried on desperate strikes.

Also printing workers Unions sprang up rapidly in several important towns (e. g. in Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, Kure, Hiroshima,) of which the most important one is the „Taishin-kai“ in Tokyo.

#### 4. Agitation against the Labour Delegate to Washington International Labour Conference.

In Sept. the Japanese Proletariat experienced three momentous events. In the first place, the Yuai-kai, throwing away its former opportunist mantle, accomplished complete reconstruction. The second event is the great „sabotage“ in Kobe with which I shall deal later.

The third occurrence arose from the election by the government of a former Director of a big shipbuilding firm as a Labour Delegate to the Washington International Labour Conference to be held in October. Against this nonsensical measure all the working classes rose up spontaneously and instinctively; huge demonstration after demonstration, violent protest after protest. Many arrests of agitators; threats to the life of the Labour Delegate. For a while the whole of the workers seemed to have become mad. In spite of the opposition of all workers, however, this absurd Delegate sailed in secret for Washington. For what? In order to entreat a special treatment for Japanese workers, that is to say, in order to continue the present sweating system, to let men and women toil for more than eight hours a day. And the Washington Conference granted this to him.

The tactics which the organised workers (led by the Yuai-kai, the Shinyu-kai, the Miners' Federation) took in the agitation is worthy of note. From the very beginning they boycotted the election of the government, and strove to unmask the true nature of the League of Nations and the International Labour Conference, and also openly propagated before the masses that the government is nothing more than the executive committee of the robber class. Japanese workers have begun



to doubt, What is the State, What is the Government. Thanks are due to the stupid government and the Black-leg International Labour Conference, without which the working class might not obtain such a mental change.

More than that; the temporary unity of Unions against the government served above all as a bond to combine them permanently, which resulted in the next year in the formation of „Federation of Trade Unions“, Tokyo.

#### 5. Trade Unions, September-December.

A no less important result gained from this event was that the government was compelled to call upon each representative of five Unions (Yuai-kai, Shinyu-kai, Osaka Iron Workers' Union, and two yellow Unions), to the electoral Meeting of the Labour Delegate under the direct superintendence of the government; however, they boycotted it. This recognition of Trade Unionism by the government extremely instigated the creation of new organisations. It was in the period of four months from October that the workers' combination movement attained its zenith.

Among metal workers, the following Unions were founded: the „Kojin-kai (Artisans' Fraternal Society)“ consisting of workers of the Tsukiji Naval Arsenal in Tokyo (in October); the „Japanese Labour Fraternal Society“ of the Yawata Iron Foundry (in October); the „Mechanicians' Union“ of engineers employed in several workshops in Tokyo (December), etc.

In the printing industry, the „Seishin-kai“, one of the militant Unions, was organised by those defeated in the general strike of July in Tokyo.

In this period, the association extended from factory to out-door workers, and from manual to brain workers. For instance: dockers' and carriers' Union in Osaka. Tokyo, Yokahama, Nogoya; agricultural workers' Unions in Tamba, Tokyo; tailors' Union in Tokyo; dyers' Unions in Osaka, Kyoto; carpenters' and cabinet makers' Unions in Tokyo. Osaka; postal workers' Union in Tokyo; clerks' Unions in Tokyo.

On the other hand, yellow and black-leg Unions rapidly increased everywhere. Most of them takes the form of the workshop committee, openly or in secret, helped or created by the employer, both for the purpose of „promoting the intimate relation between master and employee“, and of smashing the real workers' Union from within. First of all, the „Kokusni-kai“ (Nationality Society) is the one typical of such disgraceful bodies. It was formed in December by out-door workers, led by political underlings, under the auspices of the Minister of Interior. This is the curious coincidence with the „Okhrana“ Union in Russia early



this century. But the Japanese "Okhrana" has been rendering better service to its patron than the Russian. In February 1920, it did its best to break the great strike in the Yawata Iron Foundry, and now is making a bloody counter agitation against the Socialist and Communist movements.

#### 6. Industrial Battle Field, September-December.

With the rapid development of the workers' fighting bodies, strikes of large scale and long duration broke out in many industrial cities. On the other hand, the holy Tripple Alliance of employers, the government and militarists was not meanwhile idle, and was preparing for the bloody oppression against any revolts. Besides that, the economic condition stood on the verge of crisis since the summer of the year. The workers' fight became more and more bitter than ever.

In September the first organised (peaceful) "sabotage" carried on by all the workers (15,000) employed in the Kawasaki Dockyard in Kobe being led by the Yua-kai this ended in complete victory of the men after two weeks fight, and also demonstrated a new fighting weapon to the Japanese workers. Since then the peaceful "sabotage" or "go-easy" has become one of the popular methods of fighting, because it is safe from the Police Law which has been yearly throwing hundreds of "strike instigators" into prison.

October, the Shinyu-kai of printers proclaimed a new campaign for an eight hours day, bringing forward the demand to all printing firms (about 160) in Tokyo and other towns. The majority of employers having rejected the demand, strike or sabotage began in one shop after another. Against this, the employers who strongly combined into a body (the "Tokyo Printing Trade Association") answered with lock-out, threat of discharge, black-leg, bribe, etc. A chaotic condition in the printing industry continued for more than three weeks. But the victory was not on the strikers. The Shinyu-kai was badly hit again.

This defeat was but a signal for the wholesale collapse of labour disputes in the following months. In November the most vehement battles simultaneously took place in three mining fields in the northern district of Japan. The first two were the strikes for increased wages and improvement of working conditions, conducted by the Miners' Federation of Japan, at Kamatsihi iron and Ashio copper mines; the third was the demonstration against the dismissal of leading members of the Yua-kai at Hidachi copper mine. In Japan, as elsewhere, mining areas are almost isolated from the "external world" owing to their geogra-



phical situation, and consequently are under the absolute monarchy of the mine-owner. All things in mining district from the food to the police force, are entirely at the will of the modern King. Therefore, the miners' fight is always far more fierce than other workers', abounding in revolutionary colour. For instance, at the strike of Kamaishi, strikers were enveloped by a considerable number of police-men, gendarms, and at last two companies of military forces, with arrests of 37 leaders. A similar fate was on the fighters of Ashio and Hidachi; in the former case 23 and in the latter 17 were arrested. Three disputes fell almost at once in a rout of the miners.

In such an oppressive and ominous atmosphere the historic year 1919 closed.

## CHAPTER IV.

### Toward Solidarity. (1920—1921).

#### 1. Poor crop of the Unions.

Under such a state of conditions, the mushroom growth of Trade Unions which had prevailed in the previous year suddenly came to a standstill in 1920. As far as new Unions are concerned, only a few are of importance. A teachers' Union, „The Keimei-kai“, led by socialists, came into existence in Tokyo January, and in the next few months several seamen's organisations were formed in all important ports, as a result of troubles ocured from the election of Labour Delegate et the International Labour Conference at Genoa, which has been always playing a cynical part in the Japanese labour movement, arousing hostility against itself and awakening the combination spirit of workers.

#### 2. Aims of Organised Workers, and Political Action.

It is interesting to trace the changing demands of the workers. Up to the summer of 1919, almost all labour disputes originatad from the demand for increased wages or improvement of working conditions. But after the printers' general strike of July, the eight hours day began to be claimed. Especially the acquisition of eight hours by the great sabotage of Kobe on September incited this movement.

In the year 1920 another new demand was put foward, that is, the election of foremen in the workshop by the workers themselves, by which measure they meant the first step to the control of industry by themselves. For this purpose the Yuai-kai challenged the Sonoike Metal Works, Tokyo, January. Met by a lock-out, it fought for three weeks



with the support of other fellow organisations and at last won the whole demand. Soon this was followed by others.

In this month the Japanese labour movement made a sharp turn. Beaten on the industrial field, the organised workers turned their eyes towards the political side, demanding universal suffrage and abolition of the „Police Law“. For the time being, they acted in concert with some of the middle class politicians of the Opposition. Huge demonstrations were carried out in the important cities. A petition was signed by ten thousands of peoples, and lodged in the House. But before any discussion had taken place on the issue, the Diet was unexpectedly dissolved in February. Then came a General Election, at which all the „democratic“ politicians and the „popular“ parties slipped off the workers' claims from their programmes.

Betrayed and deceived, disappointed and disentranced, the workers acquired a serious lesson—the fallacy of Parliamentarism and the mistake in joining hands with the bourgeois Liberals. Without delay they returned on their field.

### 3. Defeat after Defeat.

But their own field, too, was then by no means good for them. Trade which had been on the wane since the summer of the previous year grew suddenly worse. Bankruptcy of numerous firms, closure of the workshops, and tens of thousands of unemployments grimly faced them. Moreover, the merciless class never lost the opportunity of cutting down wages to the starvation lines and crushing out the Trade Unions by the means of discharging the leading members from the shops. The demand of the poorest was answered by a threat of dismissal; strike by lockout, injunction and arrest; and revolt by violent suppression.

February, a bitter conflict broke out at the Vawata (government) Iron Foundry, Kyushu, one of the biggest factories in the Far East. Arising out of a wage demand, 15000 men led by two Unions—Yuukai and Labour Society—carried on sabotage and soon converted this into strike action. The situation became more serious when the authority summoned a mass of police, gendarms, and at last troops. This went on for nearly a month, and was finally closed with arrest of 29 leaders and the discharge of 250 strikers.

In the same month, the Transport Workers' Union conducted a sabotage on the whole lines of Tokyo municipal tramway for the improvement of allowance system. The Union fought well, and won in this



dispute. But in April again the Union called to combat for increased wages and an eight hours day. It was refused. Sabotage and then a strike began; the city transportation stood still a short while. Against this the municipal authority tried all subtle measures—hiring black-legs, bribe, threat of arrest, provocation of the „citizen“ against the strikers, propaganda on papers, etc. The end was far more miserable than that of Yawata; 83 strikers were thrown to goal and 200 discharged.

In July another big strike occurred in the Metropolis against the discharge of members of the Yuai-kai at the Osbiage Cotton Mill. Among strikers 1600 were working girls and 400 men. The employer, by locking up all the girls into the dormitory and guarding the factory with police force, thoroughly cut communication between the girls and the men outside. The Yuai-kai mobilised all branches and, with voluntary help from other Unions, fought for two weeks. But it was then at the height of economic slackness and unemployment. By threat of dismissal the unity went to pieces. The Yuai-kai lost at one time an important section of textile workers and a large proportion of organised woman labour.

In September, again, the citizens of Tokyo were startled with a threat of general stoppage of daily papers by the Seishin-kai, which demanded to all the employers an eight hours day and the minimum wages. But the dispute had ended in a pitiful fiasco, before a general strike came in operation.

All Unions, one after another, were hardly hit and beaten.

Figures of the unemployed over the country (from an unofficial record):

1920 April.	5,800
„ May	52,600
„ June	35,000
„ July	32,000
„ Aug.	30,600
„ Sept.	16,300
„ Oct.	7,000
„ Nov.	10,500
„ Dec.	42,500
1921 Jan.	5,800



#### 4. Toward Solidainty.

Now, the time of trial of the strength of trade Unions came.

It is true that almost all Unions, except non-fighting ones, experienced a big drop in membership and more or less a crippling of their fighting capacity, owing to the incessant arrests of able leaders, and economically exhausted scanty funds. However, it is equally true that even an armed suppression can not root out the spirit of combination and revolt from the oppressed masses. On the contrary, the more bitter the attacks upon them, the stronger their solidarity and class-consciousness becomes. Instead of raising a white flag, they turned, under the shower of bullets, from the offensive to the defensive, and commenced to combine all their powers against the triumphant enemy,—to federate or amalgamate several Unions. At the same time, from the inside of their camp rushed out a squadron of daring vanguards of the class war,—the „Left Wing“ section on which I shall narrate in the next chapter. That is to say, the Japanese labour movement has, through the hardest experiments, gained spiritually or qualitatively, while it lost numerically or quantitatively.

The new movement for the amalgamation or federation of separate Unions can be traced back to September 1919 when a dozen Unions of different industries temporally combined in Tokyo against the Labour Delegation of the Washington International Labour Conference. Since that time onwards, the important Unions took a co-operative action; they worked shoulder to shoulder and helped each other in every emergency.

Then in January 1920, they acted jointly for their common claim—Universal suffrage and the repeal of the Police Law. Again in May, they carried on a May Day Demonstration in Tokyo which was the first May Day held in Japan. The time became ripe for uniting them in a concrete form. In the next month, the former Joint Committee of May Day, including leading Unions led by the Yuai-kai and the Shinyu-kai (see the Appendix), was decided to come into a permanent organisation, called the „Federation of Trade Unions“. This is not a Federation in a narrow sense, but a joint committee for common purposes, industrial and political, consisting of the most advanced section of Unions in several trades and industries (metal, printing, transport, mining, tailouring, teachers, etc.) in and near Tokyo. At any rate, it is the first appea-



rance of a body expressing the whole organised workers' minds, at least, in the eastern half of the country.

In December, a similar body was formed by 14 Unions in Osaka, called „The Western Federation of Trade Unions“, (also see the Appendix).

So far I have spoken of the federation of Unions in the different industries. It is of no less importance that the amalgamation of Unions of the same trade or industry has been swiftly in progress. For instance, the Jujo-kai and the Royu-kai were amalgamated in March, called „The Koyu-kai“ (Workers' Fraternal Society), mainly composed of the employees in one of the Ordnance Factories in Tokyo. In July, a grave fusion took place in the mining industry; three big bodies—the Miners' Department of Yuai-kai, the Miners' Federation of Japan and the National Miners' Union—were strongly incorporated in a single unit, the „All Japanese Miners' Federation“, which directly affiliates to the Yuai-kai. Later, a federation was effected between various Seamen's Unions, led by the Yuai-kai; a similar attempt was successfully made in the printing industry by the Shinyu-kai and the Seishin-kai.

As a matter of course, the above mentioned consolidations are not in a position to represent the whole of the working class all over the country. Such a body, however, is paramountly necessary. So a scheme was planned by the Yuai-kai at its Conference of 1920 to hold annually a big Congress of all existing Unions for the purpose of consulting on common problems. When this plan will be carried out in practice, the Congress should become a good school-room of revolutionary education for the masses.

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## CHARTER V.

Revival of Socialism, and the „Left Wing“.

### 1. Socialism Underground, 1910—1918.

In 1910, the year of the bloody execution, the Japanese propertied class succeeded in guillotining or imprisoning a number of Revolutionists, but could achieve no effects in massacring or imprisoning the Socialist ideas, which is nothing but the product of the Capitalist System itself. Soon after the tragedy<sup>a)</sup>, Sakai established the „Baibun-sha“

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<sup>a)</sup> Toshihiko Sakai is a leader of Marxism, practically the chairman of the newly formed Socialist Federation. Co-translator (with Kotoku) of Marx and Engels, „Communist Manifesto“, the translator of Kautsky's

(Sling-ink Society), both for the study of Marxism and for supporting the livelihood of colleagues. In 1914, the Baibuh-sha started a monthly journal, „The New Society“. Naturally the society and its journal became a bond of Socialists scattered over the country and in the foreign countries.

In 1916 \*) Osugi published a syndicalist journal, „The Modern Thought“, but it could not continue long.

A little later, there appeared a few small study groups of Socialist intellectuals and workers in Tokyo, among which „The Hokufu-kai“ was prominent.

Taken on the whole, however, all those groups, papers, and activities were largely confined to the academic study of Socialist theory; and the masses of workers and their organisations were not touched by them. Poor, miserable and wretched not materially alone, but mentally also, were the exploited peoples of this period.

## 2. Revival of Socialism, 1919—1921.

Faced with the life-and-death struggles of the enslaved for their existence at home and the great practical lesson of Communist Revolution in Russia, Socialism (especially Marxism) began early 1918 to revive from a decade's enforced silence, to come out on the high-way from its refuge on the dusty bookshelf.

One year from the summer of 1919 was that of the greatest crop of Socialist literature such as never happened in the previous years. Translations, writings and papers on Socialism of all schools \*\*) (Marxism, Syndicalism, Guild Socialism, Anarchism, State Socialism, Fabianism, etc.) were published in a considerable amount by the Baibun-sha group, petit-bourgeois professors and journalists, some of them however being suppressed by the censor and some published in secret. At the same time, several groups for the study and propaganda of Socialism sprang

„Ethics and Materialistic Conception of History“, Gorter's Materialistic Conception of History, co-writer of „The Life of Karl Marx“, etc.

\*) Sakae Osugi, Anarchist in his youth, then Syndicalist, and now the true leader of the Communist group. Writer and translator on Anarchism, Syndicalism, natural science, etc.

The editor of „The Labour Movement“, weekly.

\*\*) Marx became so popular that the translation of his whole volumes of *Das Kapital* was attempted by three persons separately, and also the translation of all his important works by a few professors is in progress. His „*Lohnarbeit und Kapital*“ was translated by a professor in this period.



up everywhere. Intellectual quarrells took place between various schools.

For awhile, Communism or Bolshevism was in a state of under-current, being greatly hampered by the lunatic watch of the government against the importation of Communist literature and the communication with Soviet Russia.

Alarmed and frightened by the growing tendency of the opposite ideas, the possessing classes hurried to exterminate all „dangerous thoughts“ with the usual ruthless methods. Since early 1920, there appeared again the hysteric confiscations of „dangerous“ papers and the arrests of Socialists; almost all revolutionary propaganda meetings were brutally broken and dispersed by police and Japanese „Black and Tan“.

Fortunately, however, instead of extinguishing the revolutionary thought, this bourgeois terrorism resulted, firstly, in a hasty withdrawal of the counterfeit Socialists and Socialist Philistines from the stage<sup>\*</sup> putting an end to the „popularisation“ of Socialism, and justly leaving the victory in the hands of Revolutionary Socialists; socondly, in adding fresh fuel to the revolutionary fire, in driving all Revolutionists toward Communism. The study of Communist theory and the fragmentary informations about the real conditions in Soviet Russia through the foreign books and papers began to appear on all the Socialist papers. Although the propaganda or agitation for Communism is absolutely prohibited, it is being carried on by every possible means among workers, soldiers, policemen, and teachers with a good amount of crop.

Thirdly, it met with a cynical effect in uniting those revolutionary elements into one solid army<sup>\*)</sup> — „The Socialist Federation of Japan“ which was, in the teeth of every counteractions of the authority, openly formed in Tokyo, December 1920, although it was practically founded three months before. The Federation is in form neither a Communist nor Socialist Party which possesses a certain definite programme, but merely a body calling together individual persons and groups which had a tendency of Revolutionary Socialism in a wider sense. But practically it was engineered and led by the Baibun-sha group and dominated by Communism. Therefore, the formation of the Socialist Federation is a preliminary proceeding to create a Communist Party at no very distant date.

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<sup>\*)</sup> The Manifesto produced by the Organising Committee of Socialist Federation was confiscated before distribution. 10th Dec. was



### 3. The „Left Wing“ in the Trade Unions.

Now, turning to the workers' side, the severest experiences of the class struggle on the one hand, and the revolutionary propaganda on the other, threw a cold light on the minds of the oppressed. They gradually began to put their eyes upon the fundamental cause of their present agony—the Capitalist System, and upon the gospel of freeing themselves completely from the fetter of the system—Communism. Thus, for the first time, Communism or Socialism rightly came down from being the monopoly of the intelligentsia into the possession of the proletarians themselves. To-day everybody can observe this new or revolutionary tendency in the labour movement, as revealed in various \*) declaratiuous of the Trade Unions, in their uncompromising attitude to the master class, and in their deep hatred to Parliament.

In August 1920, for instance, each leader of the Yuai-kai, The Shinyu-kai, the Seishin-kai, the Transport Workers', Japanese Watch, Makers' Union, worked as a member of the Organising Committee of Socialist Federation. December, many rank and file members of labour organisations joined the Federation. At the Conference of the Yuai-kai, October, the „Left Wing“ or the Direct Actionist won in a debate — „Direct action or Parliamentarism“.

This the latest tendency—above all the „Left Wing“ fraction which is steadily taking in power inside the Trade Unions, though the great bulk of the masses having nothing to do with it. The time this tendency will take more definite shape, evolve in the acute Communist movement, and lead the whole of the west into it, of course

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fixéd for the inauguration, but, in anticipation of being broken up by police, it was unexpectedly (to police) held on the previous day. At the propaganda meetings on the following day, not less than 50 Socialists were arrested under a charge of seditious action. The Federation claims 2000 members over the country, publishing a monthly „The Socialism“ which is the renamed The New Society. Address. 19 Shinsaurada cho.

\*) For example: „Through the long and bitterest experiments, We, Japanese workers, learned that the function of Trade Unions is to strike at the nucleus of Capitalist System. Now the time is approaching when we shake off the yoke of the wage-slavery system—Capitalism“, (from „The Labour“, the official organ of Yuai-kai, published in Jan 1921). „Remember that our urgent demand—Eight hours day and other improvement of our conditions—is nothing more than a first step. Our final aim is upon the complete overthrow of the present wage system itself“, (from „The Fraternity“, the official organ of Shinyu-kai, published in Jan. 1921).



depends largely upon the devoted efforts of the present Left Wing leaders and Communists.

#### 4. 1921, and the Outlook.

After the failure in an attempted strike by the Seishin-kai (of news paper printers) in September 1920, there was for some time an armed truce in the field. Towards the end of the year, however, this was spasmodically broken by the fighters of Yuai-kai,—a seriously defeated strike at Kasho coal mine, Kyushu, in which more than 40 members were arrested; and a successful strike and sabotage conducted by the tailors (belonging to Yuai-kai) against the Mitsukoshi Department Store, Tokyo, the biggest shop in Japan.

The year of 1921 was opened by a thrilling event—a complete smash and destruction of the machines and workshop, and the forcible attack upon the owner and officials of a metal factory, Tokyo, by a band of furious workers who had been locked out and dismissed on the ground that they had been the members of Yuai-kai. More than 40 were arrested on the next day.

The prospect of 1921 is far more dark and gruesome. The economic condition does not seem to recover in the earlier days; the tyrannical class does not slacken the reign of terrorism.

In the past two years, the toiling masses strove and fought, by common impulse, with all means for their existence. But everywhere they were ruthlessly beaten and defeated. Exhausted and despaired, they retreated to the last stronghold, behind which the abysmal Death Ravine deepens.

Now, they are standing on the cross-roads,—more fight or the surrender to their enemy, Communist or Reformism. Here, again, they are waiting the full-hearted activity of Communist.

In closing this chapter, I will quote a few words from a Manifesto issued by the printers' Seishin-kai in January 1921, in order to show the spirit and determination of the Japanese proletarian vanguards and also to show the road through which they are going to march.

„Twice we had to be knocked down—but in order to get up to our feet Thrice. Our present silence is merely a short rest for the further fight, for rising up in full force, and for making our fight more vital, more serious, more „red.“

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## P A R T III.

# Survey of the present conditions and problems.

### CHAPTER I.

#### Statistics \*)

##### 1. The „Organisable“ Workers.

In order to understand the extent of the Japanese Trade Union Movement, it is necessary to bear in mind: (1) that agriculture and semi-agriculture occupy nearly 60 per cent. of the population (56.6 millions), (2) that the handicraft and small-scale industries greatly dominate, and (3) that there is an extraordinary number of woman labourers, chiefly employed in the textile industry (650,000 in factories and 700,009 small and home works) and other small-scale productions. (See the Appendix).

According to the latest official report (1918), we obtain the following figures in connection with a rough estimate of the so-called „organisable“ workers, with complete exclusion of wage-earners engaging in distributive, domestic, clerical, and other similar services, outdoor (including building), and agriculture labourers.

1) Factory workers (factories employing over ten);	
	1,680,000 (855,000 men & 825,000 women),
2) Transport workers (railwaymen, seamen, dockers, & post-men),	
	590,000 (560,000 men & 30,000 women),
3) Miners:	465,000 (360,000 men & 105,000 women),

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T o t a l . . . . . 2,735,000 (1,775,000 men & 960,000 women).

The total figure shows that there are nearly three millions of the industrial workers. But, as the Trade Union movement among the wo-

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\*) I refer to native Japan only and do not concern with Formosa, Korea, and other exploited lands. The Japanese official statistics are not always reliable. The first census was held in Oct. 1920.



man workers is at present extremely of insignificance, it is better to omit this section from our estimate for a moment. Thus, we arrive at the conclusion—only hypothetical—that about two millions of the manual male workers constitute the fundamental „organisable“ basis of the Trade Union.

## 2. Trade Unions.

Under such a transitional phase and a frickle state, nobody can tell exactly, how many independent Unions exist in Japan and what membership they enlist. But if I do not make a mistake, from the statistics recently published in connection with all labour organisations which existed at the end of 1919, I hypothetically estimate that the total number of Trade Unions in the modern sense certainly exceeded 100 Unions and 80,000 members, and probably did not reach 150 Unions and 100,000 members. As the aggregate number of male „organisable“ workers was about two millions, the membership of Unions numbered between 4,5 and 5 per cent. of all. This estimation may be moderately applied to the present condition.

Of those Unions, however, only one third belong to the proletarian fighting bodies.

Industries.	Workers.	Organisations.	Members.	Per cent.
Textile . . . . .	713,620	90	61,643	8.6
Metal . . . . .	222,366	82	40,125	18.0
Scientific . . . . .	141,769	67	9,047	6.4
Mining . . . . .	433,843	94	52,135	12.0
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T o t a l . . . . .	1,511,598	333	162,950	10.8
Labourers, Carriers & other				
Out-door Workers, etc. . . . .		838	269,532	

This table shows the labour and semi-labour organisations of all kinds at the end of 1919. This figures of workers quoted here differ from those added in the Appendix. But this is not my fault.

## CHAPTER II.

### Concentration of the Trade

#### U n i o n s.

##### 1. Concentration of powers in certain Unions.

Although at a glance the present situation of the Trade Union movement in Japan seems very confused and lack of unification, in reality the condition is not so. A few Unions are by far predominant in membership and tower over others, and are always leading the whole movement; above all, the Yuai-kai stands unparalleled. Next come Shinyu-kai, Seishin-kai (both printers), Transport Workers Union, Osaka Iron Workers Union, and a few other Unions which affiliate to the Federation of Trade Unions both in Tokyo and Osaka.

##### 2. Massing in certain Districts.

The Trade Union is specially concentrated in certain districts and industries. Roughly speaking, there are five busy industrial centres in Japan: (a) Tokyo and Yokohama district, (b) Osaka and Kobe district, (c) Fukuoka district, and (e) Okaya district.

(a) Tokyo and Yokohama district is not only the political and intellectual center of Japan, but also stands at the head of development of the modern industry; it is always in this area that we find the most advanced section of the Trade Unions, as well the energetic Socialist and Communist movement. The important Unions in this district are, as I said before, united in the Federation of Trade Unions in Tokyo.

(b) Osaka surpasses Tokyo in number of factories and employees, but they are largely composed of the textile and small industries, hiring a great number of women. The Trade Union and political movement is far backward after Tokyo. The main Unions are loosely combined in the Western Federation of Trade Unions. Kobe, the greatest commercial port, stands out, there is only single Union—the district committee of Yuai-kai—which is trying to include the whole of organised workers (chiefly of ship-building) in that city.

(c) Industrially, Fukuoka is young, but is to be in future a great industrial center in Southern districts, possessing the vast coal fields in its area.

(d) Nagoya is the city of earthen and textile. It is of recent date that the Trade Union movement was started.



(e) Okaya is the center of the silk industry and also of the working woman slavery. We never heard of the existence of a Trade Union in the district.

### 3. In certain Industries.

(a) Metal industry: The Trade Union in the engineering, iron, steel, shipbuilding surpasses other industries in number, power and discipline; the destiny of the proletarian revolution in Japan largely rests on this section of workers. The following are the important Unions Metal workers' sections of Yuai-kai (in Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Fukuoka, etc.); Artisans' Fraternal Society, Artisans' society, Koishikawa Labour Society, Engineers' Union of Japan, (above four in Tokyo); Osaka Iron Workers' Union, Copper workers' Union, (in Osaka); Labour Fraternal Society in Fukuoka.

(b) Printing industry: The Japanese printing workers are the most revolutionary section of the working classes. Numerically not large, but spiritually they are in the van. Shinyu-kai, Seishin-kai, Taishin-kai, (above in Tokyo and Yokohama) Printers' Union in Osaka, Kobe, Nagoya, etc.

(c) Mining industry: The miners are a powerfully organised body. Almost all organised miners belong to the All Japanese Miners' Federation which affiliates to Yuai-kai.

(d) Transport: There is a deadlock for organising the railwaymen, for all railways were nationalised in 1906 and the employees are controlled so bureaucratically—by means of the Station Committee akin to the British Whitley Council—that the real proletarian Union can not penetrate in this section. The only real Union is the Engine Drivers' Union. Workers in the tramways are making their own Union in the important cities. In Tokyo the Transport Workers' Union is most powerful.

The seamen have also a great number of organisations, but they are for the most part nothing more than labour exchanges or friendly societies. The Seamen's Union of Japan (of Yuai-kai) is the strongest. The leading Unions are federated by the Japanese Seamen's Union.

Among carriers, dockers, stevedors, rikishaw-men, and other out-door workers, there are already a comparatively great number of associations. Free labours' Union, Rikishaw-men's Union in Tokyo, Osaka Stevedore and Carriers' Union in Osaka. As a rule, this section of workers represents the yellow type of Union.

(e) Textile industry: In this industry we have hardly seen any Union except those of Yuai-kai in Tokyo.

(f) Agriculture: Farm labourers remain indifferent to the labour movement. But recently a wide agitation for organisation against the landowner has been in progress. Labourers and Peasants Society and Tenant Farmers' Union are known.

(g) Brain Workers: Keimei-kai, one of the most interesting Unions is succeeding in combining the teachers of elementary school. Salary Men's Union is a body of poor middle classes.

(h) Female workers: Woman labourers lack the organisation, except a few bodies of Yuai-kai in Tokyo.

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### C H A P T E R    III.

#### Constitution, and the Yuai-kai.

It is rather a curious feature that the structure of Craft Unionism is not very popular among the Japanese workers, and the existing Unions are for the most part constructed on the unit of factory committee, including all grades of the employees. But it is inevitable in such an immature state that the members are in fact chiefly composed of the skilled workers.

Among the rest, the „Yuai-kai“ or the „General Federation of Labour of Japan, Yuai-kai“ occupies a peculiar position in the Trade Union structure. Accordingly, it will be well to glance briefly at its constitution and strength. At the last Conference, it determined to become a federal body of Unions of Federations which are organised on the basis either of industry, trade, workshop or area, regardless of craft or skill. All units enjoy as a rule a great deal of autonomy. But in practice the Yuai-kai is more strongly united than a mere Federation. The Central Committee (elected at the Conference) has not only the right to order strikes of all affiliated bodies, but is always interfering in important businesses of the Unions. Where Unions or Branches are massed, there is a Local Committee (Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, etc.). From the administrative point, the country is divided into three wide District Committees (Eastern, Western, Kyushu) and two Industrial sections (All Japanese Miners' Federation and Seamen's Union of Japan). At the present moment, it includes several industries and trades: iron, steel, shipbuilding, mining, shipping, textile and miscellaneous trades (tailoring, building, gum-producing, etc.). It claims 30,000 mem-



bership and 150 Unions or Branches covering the whole country (from Hokkaido to Manchuria).

## CHAPTER IV.

### Legal Position of Trade Union.

There is no law directly prohibiting the formation of the Trade Unions nor recognizing them. Convinced of the impossibility of wiping out the workers' combinations, the government is now drafting a bill which is expected to be brought forward at the session of the Diet in 1922, in order to restrict the sphere of labour movement and to destroy the true proletarian Union.

Although Japanese workers have never experienced such a brutal suppression of their associations as the British workers did in 1800—1824, and the Russian in 1874, the Article 17 of Police Law (1900), which punishes the instigation for strikes and for the increase of Trade Union membership, is effective enough to hamper the Trade Union activities. The following figure shows, how many strike leaders are thrown into prison every year by the Law.

Year.	Imprisoned.		Strikes.	
	Cases.	Men.	Cases.	Strikers.
1914	4	14	50	7,900
1915	4	50	65	7,850
1916	16	40	108	8,500
1917	21	155	311	50,600
1918	34	375	417	66,500

If we count the victims arrested under the charge of „breach of peace“, etc. by Criminal Law and Press Law, they reach a considerable number.

## CHAPTER V.

### International Relations.

Owing to the isolated position of their country, to concentration of their energy on the campaigns against their internal enemy, to their youth, and to their undeveloped class consciousness, the Japanese Trade Unions have taken no part in international affairs, except a mere fraternal relation of the Yuai-kai with the American Federation of Labour, some personal connections with Chinese and Korean workers and Socialists, and the accidental intercourse of a few Japanese workers with the Western champions of yellow Unions at the International Labour Conference (at Washington and Genoa).

Recently we learned the Amsterdam Trade Union International is trying to create some relationship with the Japanese Trade Unions.

At any rate, it is of great importance that the huge land of the Far East has been not yet stained by the yellow colour of Internationalism.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### Communism and Trade Unions.

In conclusion I wish to consider an important issue that in Japan the Trade Unions should play by far the principal role in the future development of Communism more than in European countries. The reason is rather plain. In our country most of the leading Unions sprang up for, or as a result of, the fighting against the employer, and not for the mere friendly benefit nor protection of their craft privileges. Therefore, they are comparatively free from narrow-minded and exclusive spirit, free from such a superstition as draws the futile line of demarcation between industry and politics, between industrial and political action—the political „neutrality“—as British Trade Unionists like to do. In other words, from the very beginning the Japanese Trade Union has been fulfilling both industrial and political functions; and the Trade Union constitutes by itself a Political or Socialist body.

Again, it is only the Trade Union in Japan which openly combines the mass of industrial workers in a permanent form. And the government is now compelled to recognise it as one of the social powers and also to permit it more freedom than to Socialists and Communists who



are under the extreme watch of the authority, and this not because of any moderation of Trade Union leaders but because it is backed by the powerful mass forces. Consequently, it is obvious that there is no other way to influence, to capture the mass of the workers for Communism than through existing (more or less legal) Trade Union organisations, whether they are not revolutionary enough or are so.

In short, the Japanese Trade Union is not merely in a position exceedingly sensible to revolutionary ideas, but also constitutes the sole school of the masses for Communism. Nothing is more absurd, more harmful, more criminal than to neglect, to desert the proletarian mass organisations; particularly so in Japan.

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The Japanese government pays a great deal of attention to the national education. The official record tells us that more than 98 per cent of the children of school age go to school; (the elementary school is compulsory—6 to 12 years of age—and, as a rule, free). Since 1920, the regular lectures on the social, economic, and political subjects for the workers were started by the Yuai-kai in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe.

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# Appendix.



## A P P E N D I X A.

Names of Unions affiliating to the Federation of Trade Unions In Tokyo and Osaka.

A. „The Federation of Trade Unions“ in Tokyo:  
Address: Mita, Shiba'ku, Tokyo, Japan,

(1) „General Federation of Labour of Japan, Yuai-kai“:—Address: Mita, Shiba-ku, Tokyo. Official monthly organ: „The Labour“. President: \*) Bunji Suzuki. Secretary: & Treasurer: Komakishi Matsuoka (engineer, syndicalistic). The Yuai-kai represents the following big Unions:—„All Japanese Miners' Federation“, secretary: Hisashi Azo (communist); „Seamen's Union of Japan“, secretary: Kunitaro Hamada (fireman, Old unionist), „Tokyo Electric and Metal Workers' Union“, secretary: Kogure; „Tokyo Metal Workers' Union“, secretary: Tanahashi (socialist).

(2) „Shinyu-kai“ (of compositor & printers):  
Address: 611, Nakashibuya, Tokyo. Monthly organ: „Shinyu“ (Fraternity). Secretary: Tatsuo Mizunuma (communitic).

(3) „Seishin-kai“ (of news paper compositors & printers). Monthly: „Seichin“

(4) „Taishin-kai“ (of printers).

(5) „Kojin-kai“ (of the Naval Ordnance workers).

(6) „Koyu-kai“ (of the Military Powder mill).

(7) „Transport Workers' Union“ (of the Tokyo tramway employees).

(8) „Keimei-kai“ (of teachers).

(9) „All Labour Society“.

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\*) Suzuki is Reformist, but a necessary man, for a moment, as a camouflage against the attack of the authority. He is expected to resign the present position at the end of this year.

- B. „The Federation of Trade Unions of Western Japan“ in Osaka:  
Address: 9/6 Yuai-kai, 292, Enaricho, Nishinoda, Kita-ku  
Osaka.
- (1) „Western District Council of Yuai-kai“:  
Address: 292, Enari-cho, Nishinoda, Kitaku, Osaka; secretary:  
Takayama; monthly: „The Workers' Paper“. This Council  
represents Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto Local Committees.
  - (2) „Osaka Printing Workers' Union“.
  - (3) „Tailoring Workers' Union“.
  - (4) „Osaka Brush Makers' Union“.
  - (5) „Osaka Tailors' Union“.
  - (6) „Western Iron Workers' Union“.
  - (7) „Osaka Carriers' and Labourers' Union“.
  - (8) „Copper Workers' Union“.
  - (9) „Carpenters' and Carriers' Federation“.
  - (10) Western Outdoor Workers' Union“.
  - (11) „Japanese Printed Mousseline Workers' Union“.
  - (12) „Electric Workers' Union“.
  - (13) „Commercial Employees' Union“.
  - (14) „Kojo-kai“.

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## A P P E N D I X B.

### Important Socialist Organisations and Journals.

- (1) „Socialist Federation of Japan“:  
Address: 44, 1 chome, Motozono-cho, Kojimachi-ku, Tokyo.  
Official monthly organ: „Socialism“.
- (2) Rodo-undo-sha“ (Labour Movement Society), the most active  
sindica-communiss group, led by Osugi.  
Address: 12, Kita-koga-cho, Kanda, Tokyo. Weekly: „Labour  
Movement“.
- (3) „Gyomin-kai“:  
Address: 40, Shimokozuka-cho, Suwa, Tokyo.



- (4) „Jishu-kai“:  
Address: 1786, Miyashita, Sugamo-sho, Tokyo.
- (5) „Shinjin-kai“:  
Address: 5, Kami Fukimae-cho, Hongo-ku, Tokyo. monthly  
„Doho“.
- (6) „Free Man Society“: monthly: „Japanese Labour Review“.
- (7) „L. L. Kai“: Address: 42, Kasayamachi, Minami-ku, Osaka.
- (8) „Sei“ (Revolutionary peasant group):  
Address: Minami-nojiri-mura, Toyama-ken.

## A P P E N D I X C.

### Agriculture and semi-Agriculture.

#### I No. of Agricultural houtholders, (1918).

a) Farmers who cultivate their own land. . .	1,699,000
b) Tenants . . . . .	1,550,300
c) Farmers Combining tenantsip . . . .	2,229,400
T o t a l . . .	5,476,700

#### II. No. of Sericulture houtholders, (1918). . . 1,910,800.

#### III. No of Fishing houtholders and Fishermen, (1918).

	No. of houtholders.	No. of Fishermen.
a) Professional. . . . .	263,800	688,400
b) Occasional . . . . .	372,800	711,200
T o t a l . . . . .	636,600	1,399,600

The Population of Japan (1918) . . . . . 56,253,200

# APPENDIX D.

## Number of Workers in the Important Industries.

	Industries.	Men.	Women.	Labourers.	Total.
I.	1. Textile. . . . .	129,500	648,200	25,600	803,300
	2. Iron, steel, ship- building. . . . .	387,900	30,300	37,500	455,700
	3. Chemical . . . . .	113,400	46,400	16,800	171,600
	4. Printing & book- binding. . . . .	23,200	5,900	500	29,600
	5. Electric & Gas . . . . .	6,600	160	1,400	8,160
	6. Foods & Drinks. . . . .	60,900	37,200	17,300	115,400
	7. Miscellaneous . . . . .	48,900	31,900	7,300	88,100
	Grand total . . . . .	770,400	800,060	106,400	1,676,860
II.	Mining. . . . .	360,500	104,700		465,200
III.	1. Railway & Tram- way. . . . .	—	—	—	141,900
	2. Seamen . . . . .	—	—	—	255,000
	3. Carriers & Labou- rers. . . . .	—	—	—	110,200
	4. Post men . . . . .	73,800	17,500	—	91,300
	Grand total. . . . .	—	—	—	598,400
	Great grand total . . . . .	—	—	—	2,740,460

Factories employing over ten.

# APPENDIX E.

## No of Workers Employed in the „Sweating“ Works.

Besides the previous figures, there are a considerable number of labourers toiling under the terrible conditions, employed in the household, handicraft, and other small industries. Here I quote some of their examples (1918).



Industries.	Men.	Women.	Total.
1. Silk & Cotton weaving . . .	30,800	654,800	685,600
2. Plaits of Straw, Wood shav- ing & Hemp. . . . .	69,000	165,800	234,800
3. Mats & Mattings . . . . .	60,900	129,100	190,000
4. Wood, Bamboo & Vine . . .	138,400	13,300	151,700
5. Japanese Paper. . . . .	56,500	81,000	137,500
6. Earthen-Wares . . . . .	24,000	10,200	34,200
7. Oil & Waxes. . . . .	10,500	18,400	28,900
8. Lacqueue-wares . . . . .	18,600	3,400	22,000
9. Drawn work & Batten burg. .	700	16,100	16,800

# APPENDIX F.

Growth of Commercial and Industrial Companies and Capitals.

Year.	No. of Company.	Paid up Capital in Pounds.
1905	8,994	97,593,700
1909	11,543	136,716,400
1914	16,858	206,878,600
1916	18,219	243,407,400
1918	23,028	414,312,900

